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I thought you might be interested in the latest developments regarding the Dominican Republic.

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Economy Hits New Highs

- The Governor of the Central Bank announced that GDP growth was 5.7% in the first quarter of 2019, with the largest growth in construction, energy and water, finance, and mining.
- In the first quarter of 2019, the country's income in foreign currency for exports of goods, remittances, tourism, and FDI amounted to about \$7.8 million, with FDI reaching nearly \$804 million, an astounding increase of 28.2% compared to the same quarter in 2018.
- The Dominican Republic is set to surpass its neighbors in economic growth this year, with a projected 5% growth in GDP, after an astonishing 7% growth in GDP in 2018. The exponential growth can be attributed to growth in tourism, mining, manufacturing, and its free-trade zones drawing investment.
- The Minister of the Economy said that between 2013-2018 there was an average annual growth of 6.3%, and that the country has reached the lowest depreciation it has seen in the last four years.
- The open unemployment rate has dropped from 6.7% to 5.9% from 2015 to 2018, with an additional 100,000 new formal jobs added within the last year.
- There has been a decrease in informal jobs by 2% over the last year, helping to decrease poverty from 39.7% to 22.8%, bringing 1.5 million citizens above the poverty line in the last six years, and reducing extreme poverty from 9.3% to just 2.9% in the last 5 years.
- Health tourism reported revenues of \$257 million in 2018, providing services to 47,725 patients in health tourism, a 15% growth from 2018, and providing services to 69,550 in tourist medicine, a 7% growth from 2018.
- The growth in health tourism puts the Dominican Republic as the number one country on the

Medical Tourism Index in the Caribbean, which has led to large investments in infrastructure and innovative technology.

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Tourism Industry Sees Rapid Growth

- The Dominican Republic's Central Bank announced a 4.8% increase in tourists in the first four months of 2019 compared with the same period in 2018, with nearly 2.5 million visitors.
- Hotel activity accounts for over 8% of the country's GDP, amounting to over \$840 billion in income in 2018.
- The Dominican Republic continues to hold its title as the most popular tourism destination in the Caribbean, accounting for 20% of Caribbean arrivals in 2018.
- A hotel boom has led to 6,216 new hotel rooms in construction in the first four months of this year, an 8.9% increase year-on-year.
- An additional 11 properties will be added to the Dominican Republic's hotel and resort inventory in the next three years, totaling 15,000 rooms.
- In 2018, the country saw a 6% increase in hotel stock.
- The Dominican Republic recorded more than 6.5 million airline passengers in 2018, a 6.2% increase, amounting to 380,000 additional arrivals compared to 2017.
- Cruise passenger arrivals have increased 124% in the last 10 years, from 475,000 passengers in 2009, accounting for \$18 million in revenue, to 1.06 million in 2018, accounting for \$75 million in revenue. Cruise tourism currently contributes to more than 4,000 jobs.
- The Dominican Civil Aviation Board has stated that one of the most trafficked flight routes was from Toronto to Punta Cana, contributing to the over 900,000 Canadian visitors in 2018.
- The Dominican Republic Port Authority will be adding a new \$125 million cruise port scheduled for 2020, that will be able to handle 680,000 passengers per year.
- The Dominican Annual Tourism Exchange Expo welcomed a record 750 delegates, 120 businesses, 40 sponsors and 40 journalists, including: international wholesalers, tour operators, incentive groups, airlines & charters operators, hotels, destination management companies and craft vendors, where they developed and solidified business relationships.
- AAA announced that Punta Cana is the 10th most popular destination for this summer's travel based on its bookings.

<http://www.travelweek.ca/news/increase-in-canadians-new-cruise-port-and-hotels-for-the-dominican-republic/>

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<https://www.hotelnewsresource.com/article105368.html>

Dominican Government Works to Improve Quality of Life

- The Dominican Republic will be getting a new urban mobility management system, which will include 100 new intersection systems, 2,200 new traffic lights, 40 CCTV cameras, 400 CVD-standard vehicle detector video cameras, variable message signs (VMS) and control center equipment.
- Kapsch's EcoTrafIX urban traffic management software will help to reduce travel time by optimizing vehicle flow, which will minimize CO2 emissions, while improving road safety.
- Representatives of the Hotel Association of Santo Domingo, along with representatives from 13 hotels, signed the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children and Adolescents (NNA) to fight against sexual exploitation in tourism.
- The Code includes training staff on how to detect and prevent child exploitation, providing information to tourists so they can recognize and beware of these crimes, and coordinating with the community and with authorities.
- A new governmental order was created to design and implement gender policies in the Ministry of Education, which will promote gender equality and remove discrimination and violence.

<https://www.traffictechnologytoday.com/news/traffic-management/kapsch-to-deploy-new-urban-mobility-management-system-in-dominican-republic.html>

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The Dominican Government Furthers Its Bilateral Relations

- Dominican FM Miguel Vargas traveled to DC to participate in the Caribbean-U.S. Security Cooperation meeting to coordinate efforts to combat drug trafficking, terrorism initiatives, and all cross-border crimes in the Caribbean.
- Dominican FM Miguel Vargas met with the U.S. State Department and Ministers and officials from 18 Caribbean countries, where they launched the Alliance of the United States and the Caribbean for Resilience. The group discussed how they plan to promote their countries' shared interests to achieve greater resilience in response to natural disasters.
- The U.S.-Caribbean Resilience Partnership's goal is to enhance cooperation and investment, and strengthen disaster resilience by developing an early warning response system, creating aviation disaster resilience plans, creating risk reduction programs, enhancing communication networks between the nations, utilizing storm surge mapping data and meteorological services, sharing real-time information, developing a framework to deploy international military and civil defense assets for disaster response, streamlining disaster response efforts between the countries, and increasing building codes.
- Central America and the Dominican Republic will increase local trade and will work to produce higher-quality foods, as a result of a food safety capacity building initiative that the USDA, USAID, and IICA organized.
- Dominican Chief Justice of the TSE, Judge Román Jáquez Liranzo, met with U.S.

Ambassador Robin Bernstein, where they discussed how the next elections would affect the Dominican high court.

- The Dominican Republic and Portugal reestablished their diplomatic relations by signing five MOUs and cooperation agreements, including: Establishment of Political Consultations, Cooperation on Health, Strengthening Equality & Gender Equality, Academic Diplomatic Collaboration, and an agreement on Air Services.
- The Dominican Republic signed several agreements with Puerto Rico to increase cooperation in economics, investments, exports, and to expand tourism and culture.
- The U.K. and the Dominican Republic signed a trade agreement to boost business development between the two countries, allowing the other country's companies to market products without additional tariffs or barriers. (In 2017, trade between the two was almost \$275 million.)

<https://do.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-ministerial-of-the-u-s-caribbean-resilience-partnership/>

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Dominican Republic Lessens Its Environmental Impact

- The National Electricity Commission Republic authorized 12 new power generation projects: two will generate wind energy, ten will generate solar energy, and two will generate thermal energy. (A \$900 million investment.)
- The new 50-MW Agua Clara wind farm will produce enough electricity for more than 250,000 local households annually.
- Two new solar PV farms will provide 75-MW of energy annually, contributing to the country's goal to reach 604.6-MW of renewable generation capacity by the end of the year.
- Punta Cana hosts Clean, the world's hospitality recycling program to reduce waste by hotels and resorts. Working with hotels and recycling centers, the company works to create sustainability practices in the tourism industry.

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All the best,

James P. Rubin

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